

## I think we should be home by now by poopingillies

**Category:** IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King

**Genre:** Angst and Humor, Angst with a Happy Ending, Eddie Kaspbrak & Richie Tozier Swear, Idiots in Love, Internalized Homophobia, M/M, Not Canon Compliant, References to Abuse, References to Depression, being an adult is hard, i hope that's not the same as saying i'm funny

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Pennywise (IT), Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris, The Losers Club (IT)

**Relationships:** Eddie Kaspbrak & Richie Tozier, Eddie Kaspbrak/Richie Tozier

**Status:** In-Progress

**Published:** 2019-12-08

**Updated:** 2019-12-08

**Packaged:** 2019-12-16 18:35:14

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 2

**Words:** 6,639

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

Richie and Eddie's friendship is a lot more complicated than either is willing to admit, but that's fine because they eventually forget all about it - and each other. Until they have to come back to Derry to face that fucking clown and all the other nightmares they never really left behind.

## 1. Richie Gets a New Bed

### Author's Note:

IT Chapter 2 wrecked me and I am still emotionally frustrated. To fix that, I decided to fix the story (you're welcome, Stephen!).

Okay, so maybe this isn't any good, but at least in this version, the gay boys finally kiss. And also, figure their shit out. Everyone deserves the chance to heal.

When Richie got his cousin's secondhand double-bed, all the Losers went nuts. They were fifteen at the time, everyone growing a bit too big for their kid beds and begging their parents for new ones (everyone but Eddie, who seemed to have grown at most 3 inches in 3 years). Richie, in close competition with Beverly, had been the one to stretch the most, 5 foot 10 now and growing. He had spent the past year and a half sleeping with his feet hanging at the end of the bed.

Everyone went over to Richie's to check the famous double bed when it arrived. They took turns sitting, lying and jumping on it, then the novelty wore off and they all left to go biking to the creek.

Richie, however, wouldn't stop talking about it until he had successfully annoyed everyone with his god-forsaken bed, and after a week or so the topic died down – except whenever Richie added '... and my double bed' to any random sentence and made everyone collectively groan.

But then Eddie slept over, like he did, all the time.

They had been playing Nintendo games until late at night in the basement, eating chips and smoking weed (incidentally, also gotten from Richie's cousin), because Richie's parents let him do whatever he wanted and Eddie' mom forbade games, chips and non-prescribed drugs.

It was only eleven on a Friday night, but Richie could already see

Eddie's head bobbing once or twice, his yawns growing more frequent and dramatic. Richie glanced at him, leaning back against the couch and eating what he knew was his final chip. "Hey Eduardo, you wanna go to bed?"

Eddie's head fell to the side in absolute defeat, but his face was the mask of resilience. "No."

"You're such a pussy," Richie laughed, kicking at his leg, which was lying on the coffee table and fell with a thump to the ground.

"It's not my fault I woke up in time for school, okay, Richie, maybe if you had a schedule and woke up a little earlier you wouldn't be late everyday—" his yawn cut him off in the middle of his pissy rant, and Richie just laughed again. "Fuck you!"

"Yeah, yeah, whatever, come on," he got up with a groan, hand extended toward Eddie, which the boy took. Richie pulled him up, enjoying how small Eddie felt compared to his increasingly tall and lanky self.

Whenever he slept over, Richie always got a second mattress from under his bed for Eddie, made his bed as sloppily as always and fell asleep to Eddie complaining about it (if Eddie didn't fall asleep mid-rant first).

This time, however, when he arrived upstairs to his room, Richie stopped at the door. Eddie came up behind him a seconds later, carrying his little toiletry bag with him. "What is it?"

"I was thinking, do you wanna try out the double bed?" Richie asked, words spilling out of his mouth machine-gun style so he wouldn't have to actually consider them.

"You mean you wanna sleep on the floor?"

"No, I mean—it's a double bed so we can both fit in it, I mean, you're like half the size of a normal person so we can fit just fine." Richie could feel his breath failing, but he tried not to let it show. Why the hell had he even suggested it? Why would Eddie ever say yes to that?

"Okay, first of all, fuck you, Richie—" and then Eddie had walked

over to the bed and fallen on top of it. He looked even smaller on such a large bed, comically so, but Richie only watched him, stomach churning, feeling like he had made the most terrible decision. “And I don’t mind, this is better than your old mattress.”

Richie nodded. “Yeah, totally, uh—“ he turned to his closet, to distract himself for a moment, “I’ll get you some pajamas. I think I still have a onesie from when I was 9.”

“Fuck you, Richie—” Eddie shrieked.

Eddie didn’t think bed-sharing was going to be such a big deal. He had spent the biggest part of his life sleeping with his mom (something he would never in the world tell the other Losers, though he suspected they probably knew) and, if anything, he enjoyed some companionship in the dark. But then Richie turned off the light, murmured ‘Good night, Eds’ and climbed on the bed, and Eddie began to feel...

He had made a terrible mistake.

This wasn’t at all like with his mom (god, that sounded wrong).

He usually tossed and turned a lot while trying to sleep and whenever he was with Richie he would talk his mouth off until suddenly falling dead. Richie didn’t mind, mostly because Eddie knew he was never that sleepy anyway and just did it cause he knew Eddie preferred not to be alone. But now Eddie didn’t dare move a muscle, not even make a sound, and he wasn’t sure why. He was turned with his back to Richie, who felt very far away and still very close on this double bed, and he could feel the heat radiating from his friend without having to look and see if he was there. He could hear his breathing, shallow and soft, and Eddie knew he was awake. But he was quiet too.

It seemed a bit too much now, to be wearing Richie’s clothes and sleeping next to him on his bed, suddenly it felt like he was engulfed in a sea of Richiness, his smell everywhere, but it was a bit too late to pull the extra mattress, so he was just going to bear it. He closed his

eyes, trying to ignore the presence of the other boy, mentally cursing Richie for thinking this was an acceptable idea, but not sure exactly why it wasn't.

Eddie opened his eyes again, the heat too strong to bear, and realized he had fallen asleep. He felt dizzily warm, which was nonsense because it was probably around 10 degrees outside and he only had a duvet covering him. Then he realized the heat was coming from behind him – he was leaning against something.

Not something, he was leaning against Richie.

Eddie could see his spot of the bed empty, the other side of the bed feeling like a giant leap away from him. He had moved during the night. Which, of course he had, just because he could never move when he was with his mom, his body just decided to go waltzing in a bigger bed. And now there he was, back pressing against... against what exactly?

Eddie realized a bit too late there was an arm spread over him, a few inches beneath his face. He was beginning to panic a little bit. Were they spooning? Did this constitute spooning? He was going to kill Richie.

He tried to move forward a bit, heart racing, and he didn't know why he didn't just slap Richie's arm away and get pissed off, but he knew he desperately needed to move away from this position. God, he could smell Richie, and he smelled just like the shirt he had on, but stronger, weed and something musky, so strong it was making Eddie dizzy again, but he didn't want to understand why. He could feel Richie's breathing as much as he could hear it, deep and regular and totally unconscious.

Eddie wobbled around slightly, careful not to displace the arm too much in case Richie woke up. All he managed was to get himself a bit lower on the bed, back still pressed firmly against Richie's stomach – or was it his crotch? Oh god, don't think of the word crotch –

–and he realized he was getting hard.

He tried to take deep breaths, convince himself this was not

happening. He suddenly missed his inhaler, if only because it was so comforting to get some kind of solution pumped into you whenever you were losing your mind.

This was his best friend sleeping behind him! He was not about to get an erection from his best friend having a manly smell and feeling hard and manly behind him. Not from Richie, his best friend, his boy best friend, Richie was a boy—

Oh, no, no, it was just getting worse. Eddie tried to move again, this time a little more forcefully, and Richie's arm got pushed to the side. Eddie whimpered when he heard the sound of rustling behind him, and a drowsy, hoarse voice ask: "Eddie?"

Eddie thought about pretending to be asleep, but he knew this wouldn't work and Richie wouldn't stop until he said something. "I'm fine, go to sleep," he tried to sound sleepy as well, but only managed to sound pissed off.

Richie chuckled behind him, and Eddie's underwear seemed to only get tighter. "Are you upset cause I caught you trying to spoon me?"

Eddie huffed and turned to him. "You were spooning me, you dickhead," he said, and his voice broke halfway through, going up a few dramatic octaves.

Richie's smile disappeared from his face. He actually looked worried, beginning to pull back the covers. "Hey, uh, are you okay? Your face looks—I wasn't trying to do anything, Eds—"

Eddie was no longer feeling very in control of himself. He lunged forward, slapping Richie's hand away from the duvet. "Don't!" he shouted. They were close again, and Eddie could feel himself getting short of breath. He shouldn't have turned, because turning meant looking at Richie's face. That was suddenly too much to look at, too much Richie, eyes looking small without the glasses, wild dark curls falling all over his face.

"Eds?"

"Shut up. Just leave it. I—"

“You look a bit hot.”

“I’m not, I’m really cold.”

Richie was still staring at him, with no reaction. Eddie’s situation was growing a bit painful, a bit desperate, his mind running around in circles trying to figure out what to do now that he knew exactly what he wanted to do.

He swallowed hard. The more he stared at Richie, the foggier his mind got. “Richie.”

“Yeah, Eds?”

“Does marijuana make you horny?”

Richie sputtered, going red in the face, then began laughing, burying his face on the duvet.

“What the fuck, Richie!” Eddie shrieked, in as low a voice as he could manage. “I’m serious!”

“What are you talking about?” Richie wiped an imaginary tear from his eye, leaning his head back against the pillow with a sigh. “God, you looked so cute asking that question.”

He didn’t know whether Richie was joking or not, but the thought that he was serious was suddenly more pleasing than annoying. “So you aren’t horny?”

Richie stared at him. “Uh...what?”

“Forget it, forget it, good night.” He turned around, back against Richie again, and this time he waited a bit, paying attention to Richie’s breathing. He only leaned back when he could hear it moving steady again, until he was pressing against Richie, the pressure sending waves of relief to his lower parts. He breathed out through his nose, careful not to make a sound, holding back not to press harder.

“Fuck Ed,” a voice murmured, a little breathless, behind him, “what are you doing?”

“Uh, oh, nothing,” he tried to sound sleepy again and scramble back to his side of the bed, but an arm grabbed hold of him and turned him around like a doll. And suddenly he was close to Richie again, but Richie’s cheeks were red and his breathing wasn’t even anymore. Eddie didn’t remember ever thinking someone was so beautiful. Was this the weed, or just a really sudden and ill-timed bout of puberty?

“I think it’s the weed,” Eddie said, then leaned forward and kissed Richie on the lips. Richie didn’t react at all, setting off a panic alarm inside Eddie’s mind that he had indeed fucked up completely. He started pulling back half a second afterwards, his mind going fuckfuckfuck at 100 miles an hour.

Then Richie’s hands grabbed his face, and their mouths were pressed together again. This time it was Richie who kissed him, so hard Eddie got scared he might dislocate his nose (which could happen, you know, he had read about it). But the fear was replaced by an electric thrill running through him, and his head was spinning so hard he couldn’t focus on anything except that kissing Richie had been a very good idea.

It didn’t take long for Eddie to decide he was not satisfied with the kissing, and soon, with hands shaking, he was climbing on top of Richie, who looked absolutely delighted. “The weed, huh?”

“Shut up, Richie,” Eddie said.

There was a sort of quiet in the morning, which was the first sign something was wrong. Most friends are used to living in comfortable silence – hell, that’s probably the natural way relationships work. There must be quiet at some point.

But both Richie and Eddie were loud, nervous and edgy as shit, and the only times there was any kind of peaceful silence settling in between them was the times when they were sleeping or fighting – and even then the silence usually lasted about 2 or 3 minutes until they started shouting and/or making fun of each other again. There was no space for silence in a friendship like theirs, because they both functioned on words, speaking up whatever thoughts came to their



heads at any time, and speaking up even louder to drown out the thoughts that really could not come out.

And now they were quiet. Richie could hear his heart beating. He wondered if he concentrated enough he might hear Eddie's, but when he tried his ears began buzzing and he had a sinking feeling, like someone was pushing his head down in water.

He opened his mouth, for the tenth time maybe, ready to speak up, but he had run out of words, for once. It felt like Eddie had taken his voice with him when he unmasked him like that, out of nowhere, with that kiss and that weed bullshit, with the way his body felt pressing against Richie's, like he had always imagined it would but also not at all, and now he felt so fucking seen—

"I'm going home."

Richie's head shot up. "What?"

Eddie turned his head to him, slowly. He had a frown on his face, which made Richie feel a little more normal. "I'm going home. My mom wants me home early."

Richie sighed. "Can you not talk about your mom for five minutes?"

Eddie's frown deepened. "I haven't talked about my mom in hours."

That was, unfortunately, an opening for Richie, and of course he took it. "Yeah, well, good, I would have hoped you wouldn't talk about your mom when you're getting your first handjob—" A hand was pressed against his mouth as the boy in front of him hissed.

"Shut up Richie! Jesus, what's wrong with you?"

And his head was back under water, pushed down, sinking. But he smiled instead of gasping. "What's wrong with me? I wasn't the one who started blaming the weed on my erection so I could cozy up to my—

"Just shut it! I'm leaving!" Eddie got up with a jump from the bed, red in the face, eyes looking down and up and anywhere but Richie, even with Richie's eyes hanging insistently on him. "Forget about it,

okay. We won't talk about this ever again."

Like his whole body was submerged. Richie wished he would at least stop breathing and drown already. "Come on, Eddster..."

Eddie looked at him, finally, maybe because he sounded more pitiful than he had expected. "And that wasn't my first handjob, okay?"

"You fucking liar, you'd have your first handjob in college if it wasn't for me."

They stared at each other, and Eddie was the first to break into a slight smile. Richie smiled back, hoping, wishing he wouldn't leave. God, he looked so cute in those giant plaid pajamas. Richie had to hold back from saying 'I love you' or some other insane teenage crap.

"Well, that was your first time too," Eddie replied, pissed again, but Richie felt himself back on the surface. "So, fuck you for even mentioning that."

"Don't you want breakfast?"

"I need to take a shower."

"You can take a shower here."

Eddie crossed his arms. "What, so we can take a shower together?"

Richie raised up his hands. "Wait, wait, wait—I didn't say that. You did. Do you wanna take a shower together, Eddie? You could just go ahead and ask."

"Goddammit, Richie!" Eddie stomped his foot. Absolutely adorable. "This isn't a joke! We shouldn't have done this, now we just have to — I don't know, pretend it never happened and move on with our lives and hope that this doesn't traumatize and scar us forever."

"I'd imagine you have a lot more to be traumatized by, considering your life so far," Richie pointed out, leaning his head on his hand.

"Please don't mention that fucking clown."

“I was actually talking about your mom and that weird shape of your head. I think you’re gonna have it rough in the years to come.”

Eddie sighed. Richie was losing him. Jesus, was it time to be making jokes? But he couldn’t keep up this conversation, he was not ready for this conversation, he had never been ready for any conversation involving Eddie and this ever in his life. “I’m serious, Richie,” Eddie said, but Richie wasn’t ready for that. Being serious implied a lot of things he did not want to deal with.

“We don’t have to act like it’s such a big deal.” This time Richie tried not to sound pleading. He didn’t want to let him know Eddie was breaking his heart. But maybe Eddie wouldn’t act like this if he knew.

“We won’t act. We’ll just forget it.” Eddie pointed a finger at him. “I hope you don’t have any messed-up sexually-transmitted diseases.”

Richie laughed. “You’re the little porcelain kid, I’m hoping you don’t give me any of your many mystery illnesses.”

He clearly didn’t know what he was doing at this point, and Eddie had had it. He grabbed at his bag and rushed out of the room, closing the door with a dramatic bang. Richie didn’t try to stop him or say anything at all. He just dropped his head back, exhausted, and tried to keep the tears from spilling out. When that didn’t work, he put Eddie’s pillow over his face, hoping the smell of his friend might drown out everything else (who knows, he might die of asphyxiation in the process).

That was the first time they kissed.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Fun Fact: weed can indeed make you horny, if anyone was wondering, so Eddie's concern was actually valid (but also total bullshit).

This chapter takes place after IT chapter 1 (you probably noticed, but I like unnecessary explanations).

Any feedback (thoughts, out-of-place insults, over-

the-top praise) is welcomed and highly recommended!

Also, go listen to David Bowie's 'Time', which inspired the title of this fic (because I am a dummy and misheard the lyrics, but still! the lyrics fit these sad people very well!)

## 2. Richie is a Banned Book

It happened again because of course it would happen again. Richie didn't mean for it to happen again, even if he wanted it more than anything (and would have died before saying it). In fact, he actively avoided being near Eddie, touching or teasing him after the incident, scared that any false step would be read as something more now that the secret was out in the open (or was it?).

Everyone noticed, because teasing Eddie was Richie's part-time job, but no one said a word about it. It didn't last long. A couple of days later, as they were leaving Bill's house after game night, Eddie walked home with him, even though neither of them had said anything. Richie stopped in front of his door.

"I don't have any weed left, just so you know."

"You sound like a drug-dealer, Richie," Eddie scoffed, standing in front of him. "Why are you acting weird?"

"I'm not acting weird."

Eddie frowned. "Everyone noticed. Maybe stop acting weird."

"How am I acting weird? I'm just being myself—

"You barely even talk to me, and everyone can see you're acting like —

"I'm cracking all my jokes, I didn't know I was supposed to—

"—like you're scared to touch me or something, I'm not contagious, you fucking asshole—

"—try so hard to be 'normal', maybe if you stopped analyzing my every move like I'm part of a fucked-up experiment I would go back to being good old Richie—" And then Eddie kissed him and effectively won the argument.

The sound of a car driving past made them both jump away, hearts racing, even though it was dark and it lasted only a second. Eddie

stared at Richie, eyes wide, but Richie was smiling.

“Wait, let me guess. You smoked some weed, you got horny and Mrs. Kaspbrak was unavailable.”

“You’re disgusting.” Eddie punched him in the arm, and Richie didn’t even try to avoid him, smiling still. “Your mom was unavailable.”

“I’m available.”

Eddie cracked a smile, gazing away from Richie, who could swear he had just made Eddie blush. “I have to get home.”

Richie had a million questions running through his head at that point, most of which could be summarized as ‘What does this mean?’, but he didn’t have the guts to ask any of them. Some things you just act on rather than talk about, and Richie was beginning to understand this just might be the case.

So he just said, “Kiss your mom good night for me!”.

Eddie flipped him the finger and left, but Richie would have made a bet with all the clown demons in the world that he was still blushing.

It turned into a habit, without them planning it or even realizing it. It was an easy habit to fall into, because their routine was already based around each other, and all they had to do was lean into the traditions and rituals they were already familiar with since childhood to find that...actually, nothing much had changed.

They walked a bit closer together, maybe touched a bit more and the teasing had become a bit more sexually-charged (if that was even possible), but honestly, no sharp observer would be able to tell the difference.

They jumped on each other whenever they managed to get away from the Losers long enough. Richie pinched Eddie and made him giggle whenever they were with the group and then Eddie had to get pissed off and fire insults at him at 100 mph like he always did, but Richie just smiled like a doofus in response, and they both secretly

loved it. They kissed when they went home and stayed up all night together in Richie's double-bed whenever Eddie managed to sleep over.

He started sleeping over quite a bit.

They didn't talk about it, about what it meant, because talking about it would mean acknowledging it, as something different and not normal. If anything, it was just a natural extension of their friendship.

(That was absolute bullshit and Richie knew it, but he didn't know if Eddie knew it, he didn't know what Eddie thought of this at all because they didn't talk about their feelings, and Richie was too scared of having Eddie make a run for it the moment he mentioned anything about love or 'hey, I'm gay, in case you haven't quite noticed').

But Richie was happy. He was absolutely ecstatic. Having Eddie want him, want to kiss him. And being able to kiss him back whenever he wanted to was like a god-sent gift for surviving the last 16 years of his life pining after his best friend like a fucking loser.

What a glorious time to be a loser.

This went on, with a few dramatic interruptions here and there, until a few weeks before Richie turned 18. It was a sunny afternoon outside, and they were sprawled on Richie's bed, reading comics, legs tangled together, kicking each other every once in a while.

"I can't believe they banned this comic from school just because of the robot storyline," Eddie commented, pushing against Richie's knee to get his attention. "It's so dumb, either way, why would a robot worship Satan?"

"Pretty dumb, yeah," Richie replied.

"I guess every book is just gonna be labelled 'profane and atheist' from now on," Eddie continued, turning the book over and glancing at the back cover in boredom. "They could use that for you too, Richie."

“Yeah, they could.”

Eddie looked up from his magazine to stare at Richie, suspiciously quiet at his very funny remark. Richie wasn't even reading, he was just staring at his hand, fingers drumming against a comic cover.

“What's up with you?” Eddie asked, worry suddenly starting to creep up. Richie was not the kind of person who would just go quiet without very good reason – even when he had good reason to be quiet he still talked his ass off.

Richie raised his eyes at him and gave a tense smile. “I'm just amazed at how you can capture my essence in words.”

“I think I'm leaving out quite a bit from that description.”

Richie's tight-lipped smile remained. Eddie was puzzled about what to say next. They had been fine a second before, but now it seemed like he had been dropped on a wholly new situation. He dropped the comic and crawled forward, settling against Richie's lap. He didn't like not knowing what was going on in Richie's mind (something that had been happening more and more lately) but touching him always brought him comfort.

Richie ran his fingers through Eddie's hair, thoughtful. “Hey, Eddster?” Richie said, not looking at him.

“You sound very serious and that's scary, so please don't fucking pull a prank on me right now.”

Richie looked up at him, eyes full of mischief, and Eddie felt himself exhaling more easily. “It's not a prank.”

“How come I don't believe you?”

It was Richie's turn to breathe in and out rather dramatically. “Ok, let's try again: hey, Eddie, I'm going to leave this piece of shit city, do you want to come with me?”

Eddie blinked. It was difficult for someone like Eddie to go speechless, but here it was. It lasted about five seconds. “What? I'm sorry, what?”



"I'm quitting Derry. As soon as I turn 18."

"Richie, that's—that's in a month!"

"I know, and—"

Eddie didn't let him finish, slapping Richie's hand away and climbing from his lap. He sat up in front of the boy, feeling the burning sense of betrayal turning into fiery-hot anger in a flash, and he had to hold his tongue not to start spewing every obscenity he could muster against Richie. The rational part of him tried to keep control, to give his best friend a chance to explain himself, because there had to be some kind of explanation.

"What are you talking about, Richie?" Eddie asked, voice and face attempting to stay neutral.

"I decided a couple weeks ago," Richie began, his apologetic expression only fueling Eddie's anger, "I was going to tell you sooner but—"

"A couple weeks ago??" Eddie interrupted, voice rising. Oh, he was about to burst. He wasn't sure what was going to come out though, the way his heart was beginning to speed out it might as well be a panic attack. "You decided you were going to leave forever weeks ago and you didn't say anything?"

Richie raised his hands defensively, voice pleading. "Okay, I know you're upset, look, if you would just not curse me to Hell before hearing me out—"

"What do you even want to say to me??"

"I just did, I asked you to come with me."

Eddie stared at Richie, rage written all over his face, because he didn't know what he was supposed to feel or do, and anger felt like the safest option. Nothing about this made sense, nothing had been foreseen, and he was not prepared to deal with it now or-or ever.

"No, I mean—fuck you, if this is a joke—" He got up from the bed and put on his shoes, the room suddenly getting too hot.

“It’s not a joke. And trust me, this is probably the only time in my life I’ll be saying this. And also, don’t put on your shoes, Eddie. Eddie, don’t walk out—Eddie—”

Eddie could hear Richie hurrying to catch up with him as he ran down the stairs and walked out the door, onto Richie’s unkept front lawn. “Eddie!”

Richie held him by the arm, and because Richie was stupidly big for his age (Eddie was not going to admit he was stupidly small), he was forced to stop. “Can you be a little gentler, trashmouth?”

“I don’t want you to be upset.”

Eddie suddenly realized the emotion his anger was trying to mask was ‘about to burst into tears’ and it just made him even angrier that Richie seemed to recognize that. “I’m not upset! I’m pissed off! What the fuck, Richie—how can you even talk about it like that?” Eddie pulled at his arm and Richie let it go, his face crumpled into sadness. It scared Eddie to see it, to see him so naked and to see his own feelings reflected there, when Richie was the one person who masked everything beyond amusement.

“Because I’m trying to talk to you about it, Ed.”

“Are you just gonna drop out of school and run away? To do what? You’re just gonna end up in a homeless shelter with pneumonia by the time you’re 20, you know that, Richie, you’re being so fucking irresponsible—”

“It’s not like I was ever going to use my diploma for anything anyway —”

“What the fuck, Richie, do you even have a plan, I knew you were an idiot but I didn’t think you wanted to just throw your life away—” Eddie was stunned into silence by Richie moving forward and grabbing him by the arms.

“Eddie, if I have to spend another year in this fucking backwater town I’m going to kill myself and I don’t wanna have to die in this shitty-ass place with fucking psycho clowns running around,” Richie

said. "I have a plan. I know what I want to do. I'm going to Los Angeles. There's nothing for me here. Fuck, there's nothing for any one of us here, and we've all known it this whole time."

Eddie stared at him, shocked. "Los Angeles?"

"We can go somewhere else, if you'd like," Richie replied immediately. "I know you don't like that big city pollution."

"In a few years, we won't be able to escape urban pollution anyway, it's only a matter of time until everyone develops asthma," Eddie said. Richie smiled at him, probably thinking it was safe to do so now, but Eddie's eyes went hard again, because he was supposed to be pissed off. "And don't change the subject!"

"I'm not!"

"And don't—" Eddie pushed Richie's arms away, taking a step back, with a quick glance around to make sure there was no one watching, "don't touch me! I don't understand how you can say that kind of thing to me now, I—do the other guys know?"

Richie stared at Eddie like he was some kind of idiot, which just upset him more. "No. You know. Only you."

Eddie swallowed hard, ignoring the beating of his heart. "Well, if you want my advice, I think your plan – which is barely even a plan, to start with – is fucking stupid and you are going to starve to death in Los Angeles because you don't have any practical skills—"

"I can tell jokes."

"Your jokes are terrible."

"Hey!" Richie pointed at him. "Your mom always laughs."

Eddie raised his hands in distress. "Goddammit, Richie! Why do you have to be like this? Why would you want to skip graduation and prom and everything and just—"

Richie laughed. "I wasn't gonna go to prom anyway, who would I take? Beverly's gone."

“Oh, you think you would have taken Beverly?”

“Well, your mom was unavailable, you wanted me to take you?”

Eddie just glared at him.

Richie fixed his glasses and pushed his hair back, pulling at it slightly with what Eddie was happy to notice was frustration. Well, this conversation was clearly not going the way either of them expected. “Please don’t be mad at me.”

“I am always mad at you.”

“You don’t have to be. You can come with me. We can leave together.”

“There’s no way I’m skipping town without finishing high school, Richie. I might as well shoot myself in the head and get it over with.” Eddie’s fists were tightened and he felt like a ball of nerves, but Richie had a weird power to disarm him sometimes, with the way he looked at him and half-smiled, or just looked at him, or just stood there.

He used it now, without knowing, and Eddie could feel himself unraveling, losing his edges.

Richie had a knowing smile, but his eyes were sad. “I figured as much, nerd. I can wait for you, you know. There’s no hurry.”

Eddie scoffed, trying to keep up the pretense even though his insides were aching. “Aren’t you ready to leave in a month?”

“Not if you come with me, Eddster. I’d be willing to wait a few more months for you. I could use someone that nags all the time and makes me look handsome and fun by comparison.”

“Fuck you.” But his palms were open now, heart gone soft.

“I’m serious, you’d make the absolute best wingman.”

“I am too.”

Richie's smile was tight-lipped now. "Won't you leave Derry forever with me?"

Eddie wanted the anger to fuel him again now, but his insides had turned to mush, crumbled into bits and pieces. He needed the anger, because it was not fair, it was not fair for Richie to ask this of him, when he knew, he fucking knew—

"I couldn't—" Eddie started, eyes going down.

"I know." Richie waved his hand in the air, at everything around them (which mostly included his family's very unkept garden). "You can't leave this, right?"

"I can't leave my mother."

Richie snorted, but the anger seemed to have bounced from Eddie to him. "Your mother is fucking crazy, Eddie. You know that. She's been poisoning you for years and you've known that since we were kids."

"You don't know anything, Richie, she needs me—"

"No, she doesn't, you're not even fucking asthmatic, you don't need that fucking inhaler and you never needed that fucking fanny pack!"

The panic Eddie felt at being called out triggered the anger again. Full edge.

"Fuck you, you don't know anything about any FUCKING THING YOU SELFISH FUCKING ASSHOLE!"

Some kids in tricycles chose that particular time to ride by that street and pass Richie's house at this particular point, and Eddie could hear all the little wheels stop spinning all at once right, followed by little gasps behind him. He took a deep breath and stared at a snickering Richie, who had a hand over his face to try to keep his laughter contained.

Richie stopped laughing once Eddie had stared hard enough, and he could hear the wheels turning again and driving away, the sound of children chuckling followed.

"I'm glad you'll be such a good influence on the children of Derry once I'm gone," Richie observed.

"Fuck you, Richie, seriously," Eddie said. "Fuck you for even asking me that."

"I know I'm being selfish," Richie shrugged. "But I thought— maybe you'd want to come. I wish you would, because it would be good for you. Getting away from here would be good for us, you—you could be whoever you want to be out there."

"Who would I want to be in L.A.?"

Richie sighed. "Come on, Eddie."

"Come on what, Richie?" He was daring Richie to say it, to say anything that might cross that line. A part of him hoped he would do it, the other was readying itself to punch him in the face if he did.

"Well, you could be a guy who doesn't have asthma, for starters."

"Fuck you, you know I have a condition and I need that inhaler to survive, so could you stop—"

Richie rolled his eyes again, and Eddie swallowed hard. He didn't want to be so angry right now. He wished Richie could be serious, but was also scared of what that would mean. "I can't leave my mom," he continued. "And I won't leave everyone. It's not like Derry is dangerous, not anymore."

"Dude, of course it's dangerous." Richie was looking at Eddie, but Eddie's eyes were unyielding. "Derry could be the safest town in America and it would still be fucking dangerous."

"I won't go with you, so give it up."

"Fine. But I'm going."

"No, you're not."

"I am. I wish you could be less of a fucking headstrong little shit and just come with me."

“Oh, keep insulting me like that, Richie, I just might reconsider dropping my whole future for a life inside a dumpster in the big city.”

Richie groaned and sighed, grabbing at his hair and pulling at the curls. “Why do you have to be like this?”

“Why do you have to be so weird?” Eddie spat back.

“Because I love you, you dimwit, and I wanna keep you safe.”

Eddie stared at him, his face immediately heating up. It was like a slap to the face, and he suddenly felt like a kid, completely out of his depth and—scared. He wanted to glance around him, make sure no one was around, because suddenly things were indeed dangerous and he wasn't ready for any of it.

“You can't keep me safe, Richie,” he said, because he had to say something and also vehemently deny that Richie had said those words to him, had meant it any other way than in good old friendship.

Richie shrugged again. “Yeah, but I'd still wanna try. Cause I'm an idiot and I love you. I love you, Eddie.”

“Shut up.”

“I'm not joking.”

“You're always joking.” But Eddie knew he wasn't joking because there were tears in his eyes.

And also because he knew. He had known all along.

He wished Richie hadn't said it.

“I have to go home.”

Richie laughed, his eyes glimmering. “Of course, Eddie has to go home. Because what if his mother knew what kind of conversation he was having?”

“At least I have a relationship with my parent. You’re just gonna disappear on yours because they don’t pay attention to you.”

“Well, we both turned out pretty fucking messed up, so I don’t think we should be comparing,” Richie replied.

Eddie nodded. “You’re right, Richie, we’re messed up.” He gestured wildly to the space between them. “This whole thing is messed up. And I’m not going to let you keep dragging me into your shitty fucking dysfunctions. If you want to screw up your life and ruin any chance of having a decent future, you can do that alone. And don’t come crying back to me when you come back to Derry broke and full of STDs because you’re an idiot!”

“I’m not coming back,” Richie said, and his eyes were still shimmering so much Eddie had to keep looking away to maintain his composure. “I’m never coming back here.”

“That’s bullshit.”

“No. Everything else is bullshit. This is for real. I love you, Eddie, you fucking asshole.”

Eddie raised a finger to argue, found he didn’t have any strength left, then just muttered ‘Forget it’, and turned around. His face felt hot and he wanted to shout at Richie that no, you are the asshole, because you are abandoning me, and what for? but Eddie just walked home, feeling his stomach tangled up in a knot and the tears threatening to fall every step he took.

If you really love me, you won’t leave me here.

But Richie left.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

I feel torn between thinking this is both in and out of character for Richie. But I think he would only ever pour out his feelings if he had an escape plan (in this case, ‘Man, I’m gonna tell Eddie I love him, but only because I’m gonna skip town immediately after and never see him again. This is a great plan.’).



Deep down he knows Eddie feels the same, just like he knows Eddie was never going to follow him. Eddie is way more in denial than Richie ever was about all the trauma he has faced, which is probably why he falls hard on his old habits, because he can't recognize them for what they are. Richie, on the other hand, thinks they are something tangible he can run away from, when it's never quite that simple. I think if they had actually tried to talk to one another they might have managed. That's what makes it so sad, that they were there for each other the whole time, loving and supporting each other, but they never really listened, because listening would have meant acknowledging and bringing into the light every fear and hurt that they shared.

Well, stay tuned for the next chapter! And not to be annoying or anything but, leave a comment! Share your thoughts! Send some love (or mild amusement)!